

Funds Available to Reduce Irrigation in Republican Basin

Short Deadline for Application-July 24 thru Aug. 4, 2006

Partnership Offers Landowners another Option to Reduce Irrigation Water Use

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the Upper, Middle, Lower Republican and Tri-basin Natural Resources Districts are offering about \$1.7 million dollars to irrigation farmers to reduce water usage.

This special incentive is available only for groundwater irrigation systems within the Republican River Basin (see map on back). This incentive may likely be a one-time offer that will depend on future state, local and federal budgets.

Landowners will receive a total of \$675 per acre, shared among the three organizations. Land entered into this incentive will be in a contract with NRCS through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. NRCS will pay \$100 per acre for three years. The State and Natural Resources Districts will offer an additional, one-time payment of another \$375 per acre. One State/District contract will be required.

This incentive requires a permanent easement for the land, which means it can never be used for irrigation again. Landowners will retain ownership. It can be used for dry land crops or planted to grass. Producers can apply for an additional EQIP contract to apply terraces, establish

grazing systems, etc. The easement stays with the land forever, even if ownership changes.

THE INCENTIVE DETAILS

Land must have been irrigated for four of the last six years using only ground water. The well that irrigates the offered field must be located within the initiative area and be NRD certified irrigated fields. The maximum area that can be enrolled and receive payment can not exceed 160 acres per participant. An existing field may be subdivided **ONLY** when the field size exceeds 160 acres. Each contract must include at least 15 acres. The pipes, pivot, and all other equipment used to irrigate the enrolled acres must be permanently removed, detached or disabled.

WHY THIS SPECIAL INITIATIVE?

Republican River irrigators are dealing with drought. They also need to reduce consumptive use in the basin to aid in compliance with the Republican River Compact. Irrigated lands near the Republican River and its major tributaries have the quickest positive response on the base flow of the river. This incentive compliments the options in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program that is also still available.

